



ANNUAL REVIEW 2020

January - December 2020

www.swindondownsgroup.org.uk

ANNUAL REVIEW 2020

Families are what make the world a fun place to be. They make us laugh, they make us cry, they give us opportunities and they are by our side when we need them.

We are a family.

Actually, we are many families, all volunteering our time and experience as parents, carers and siblings to make life that bit more fun and ensure our family with Down's have all the opportunities and support they need from birth to old age. As a volunteer-family led charity we have seen it all - from newborns to adults and beyond - and can positively say that where there is a desire to be better; to have all the same opportunities as everyone else it can not only be achieved but surpassed.

We are proud of what we offer to our members and we are equally proud to say that through the hard-work and energy of our family, we have had another outstanding year:

With that we would like to offer our thanks to everyone who has helped and supported our Group, through membership, donations or volunteering - you've helped us to achieve more than we could imagine.

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MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

“A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER”

At the end of what can only be described as the strangest of years, I wanted to write a more personal message to all our members and supporters.

For all of us this has been the most unusual year imaginable. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to all the key workers out there, whether they be nurses, doctors, carers, teachers or retail workers.

I want to say a huge thank you to you all for showing true spirit - not only have you been parents/carers, but teachers as well, along with some of us having to work from home and holding everything else together for our loved ones, so well done everyone, you should be so proud.

The Coronavirus pandemic has meant we have entered a new world for us as a charity. While it has had a major impact on our fundraising abilities and finances, it has meant we have had to change the way we provide our services to you.

With most of our members having access to online platforms we have been able to adapt our speech and language therapy, youth club, 0-5 coffee mornings and primary support groups to virtual sessions.

In place of our summer trip, we sent out Summer Activity Boxes. At Christmas we sent out boxes full of goodies and activities for you and your families to enjoy. As Trustees it has meant we have had to 'think outside the box'. It was a challenge we accepted to continue the support of our members.

Another consequence of the pandemic was our long-standing relationship with Swindon Borough Council, our service provider for speech and language therapy, came to an end. Due to circumstances beyond our control, Swindon Borough Council were no longer able to provide the Group with weekly speech and language therapy which they have provided us for over 20 years. Erica has worked with so many of our young people over the years and we would like to take this opportunity to thank her

for all the amazing work she has done and let her know that we will miss her very much.

Being able to communicate is such a fundamental part of our ability to be a part of our communities, workplaces and families. For us as Trustees, we had to look at how we could continue to provide this vital service to our members during this time.

We have found a way to make it possible to deliver speech and language therapy virtually and early indications show this is working well. Changing to a virtual platform made it difficult to continue with the language groups that we had worked in previously so we had to look at ways to fund individual sessions for everyone that accessed SALT.

We worked hard to apply for grants and we were lucky to receive support from The National Lottery, The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust and Wiltshire Community Foundation. Our Patron, Cliff Puffett, has been a great advocate for SALT and with his support we received further donations from him and the members of his Rotary Club. Thank you so much for making this happen!

We have all missed so many events in 2020, some of which we had looked forward to for a long time. I will be so pleased when life can get back to some normality and we see our weekly sporting events, drama project, Salamander and so much more back on the calendar.

I must thank our board of Trustees for everything they have contributed over the last year. They too have had to juggle their own lives while supporting the Group. We are a small local charity, run by ten very dedicated volunteers who give up their time for you.

Thank you to everyone for your support during these difficult times. Take care, stay safe and we look forward to seeing you very soon.

Kim West, Chairperson
Swindon Down's Syndrome Group

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Despite the pandemic we still had many achievements in 2020, here are just some of them:

£14,578

was received by the Group through fundraising in 2020

119

families now receive regular information through our mailing list

£1,080

was raised through voluntary membership donations

27

educational professionals attended our annual pre-school and primary training day

300

copies of our magazine Downtime, were distributed to members and our local community

96

Summer activity boxes sent out to our members

£40,663

Raised through donations and grants to provide speech and language therapy

100

members received a Christmas gift box from the Group in place of our usual Christmas party and pantomime trip

17

members enrolled for Speech and Language Therapy with the majority receiving SALT on a weekly basis

£4,466

raised in donations and grants to support adults in the world of work

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR



Singing Hands

We were delighted to be able to offer members a couple of fun filled sessions from the amazing Singing Hands during Lockdown. They focus on learning language in a way that it is motivating, engaging and most of all, fun!

Lord-Lieutenant of Wiltshire



We were truly honoured to receive this lovely thank you card from HM Lord-Lieutenant of Wiltshire to everyone at the The Swindon Down's Syndrome Group. It really means a lot to be recognised for all the work we do as #volunteers especially in challenging times like we are in now. So thank you so much and well done to everyone



We get welcomed to Foundation Park

The Swindon DSAActive went to visit the new Swindon Foundation Park ground to have a look around. Thank you to Phil for showing us around, it really is a fantastic place. We look forward to playing there when things return to normal.



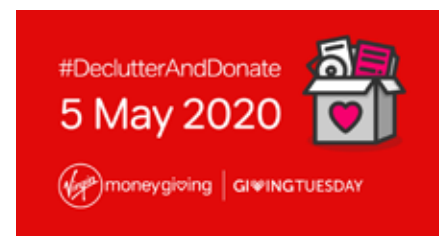
Downtime magazine

Our self-published magazine Downtime is now in it's fourth year of production.



Tiverton players pantomime

It was fantastic to be given the opportunity to watch the final dress rehearsal before opening night. Thank you for a wonderful evening - what a brilliant performance.



Declutter and Donate 2020

Virgin Money Giving and World of Books Group asked the public to #DeclutterAndDonate unwanted books, games, DVDs and CDs to help support charities like us.



2020 was the year where everything went virtual, including our AGM. Unfortunately our Open Day had to be cancelled. We were very much looking forward to showcasing what we do. Our Open Day will be back as soon as it's safe to do so.



Kerry celebrates 20 years service

Kerry Montague started working at Sainsbury's part time when she was just 19. Kerry has recently celebrated her 20 year milestone. Kerry works 16 hours a week as a Grocery Assistant at the Stratton St. Margaret store.



Practicing football skills in lockdown

The DSAActive Football team were hard at work practicing their skills during lockdown. Thanks to Cherylin they were able to pass the ball into each other in a fantastic video.



Clucking 19 drama project

During lockdown the Rubber Chicken Inc. Group were hard at work creating a lockdown medley of entertainment.



Lottery funds new parent packs

A ticket for Swindon Community Lottery costs £1 per week and 50p go directly to us if selected as your chosen charity! We use this money to provide congratulations packs for new parents.

You celebrate VEDay

Celebrations for VE Day were a little different this year, it was great to see how our members marked the 75th anniversary.



SUPPORTING NEW PARENTS

Our support for new parents has gone from strength-to-strength.

BY AMANDA AGER

This year has thrown many challenges at us all, and we have had to adapt and find new ways to continue to support new parents, whilst not being able to meet face-to-face at our usual monthly stay and play sessions.

Firstly, we set up a New Parents WhatsApp group, so we could always be on-hand if anyone wanted any advice, or just to chat. We now have twelve members in the group. If anyone else would like to join, please contact me on the details below.

We have also held virtual coffee mornings over Zoom. These have given us the opportunity to 'see' each other, (and our gorgeous little ones!) have a catch-up, and discuss any issues we are having, so we can mutually support each other.

During the first lockdown, as many of us were unable to access the support we would usually have, we arranged a Zoom Speech and Language session, where Erica Ford spoke to us about ways to encourage communication in children under five with Down's syndrome.

In December, we had our first Zoom Speech and Language Therapy session



"Been totally rubbish not being able to meet up but the pre-school parent WhatsApp group has been amazing. Everything from pick your brain stuff, to I need to rant to get it off my chest stuff, to look at what my little one just did stuff"

VICTORIA ARGUE, PARENT

Please send me an email (amanda@swindondowns.org.uk) or my contact number is 07825 718691, if you need anything.

with Martha Currie, from Mable Therapy. This was Christmas themed, and we had lots of fun singing and signing, and making Christmas pictures.

This year has seen us giving out our first Prenatal support packs, which contain a book entitled Wouldn't Change A Thing, very kindly donated by the charity WCAT.

Even though we are still unable to meet face-to-face at present, I am still very much here for support.



13
FAMILIES
WITH CHILDREN
7-11 YEARS
OLD

PRIMARY SUPPORT

BY MICHELLE JAMES

This time last year, I was looking forward to developing my new role as the groups Primary age contact.

Cailey and I had plans to launch a coffee and catch-up session for Primary school parents as well as re-launching the half term soft play sessions. Unfortunately, Covid has meant that these plans were not able to happen.

Despite this, we do have a closed Facebook group, SDSDG Primary Support, where we can share information and advice for parents.

We also have a WhatsApp group where parents can keep in touch with each other and ask for help or advice and I have organised some virtual catch-up sessions on Zoom.

Victoria is one of the parents who accesses the WhatsApp group.

"Whilst 2020 saw most of our energy focussed on home schooling and helping our children adapt to the constant changes, we still managed to find the time to establish a What's App group and stay connected with Zoom calls. Some of us have known each other since our children were born. Some have never met. We now have 10 members of our group – if you have a child of Primary School age and want to join the chat – which has covered everything from grommets to Christmas present ideas- do get in touch. It can be a useful forum to ask for help and advice or just a good old fashioned moan or brag!"

I have worked with Kim, Cailey and Victoria to revamp the school packs and I was able to attend the virtual training day which was very informative. Fingers crossed that by the time I write my next annual report, I will have been able to go into schools and work with staff in schools to support them with helping our children to learn and flourish in a mainstream setting.

SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPY

The national lockdown has brought many challenges, particularly when it comes to accessing support services for our young people. That's why we are thrilled to talk about the success of our collaboration with Mable Therapy.

BY KIM WEST & MARTHA CURRIE

When Swindon Borough Council could no longer provide Speech and Language Therapy to our Group we had to look for an alternative provider.

Mable Therapy provides specialist online speech and language support and they have been working with many of our families offering weekly virtual speech and language sessions since October 2020.

Online speech therapy means we have continued to provide this vital service to all of our members enrolled. Our children and young people access this from home on a laptop or tablet and meet their therapist once a week for one-to-one support. Sometimes this can be direct work just with the young person, and for younger children, this is collaborative family work.

"I was very impressed with the set up, I wasn't sure it was going to work and thought it maybe too babyish, but it was good and set at the right level"

17 MEMBERS ENROLLED FOR SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPY



Being on the computer means the therapy is embedded in fun games and activities, designed to reduce anxiety and encourage engagement.

Virtual speech and language therapy means Swindon Downs Syndrome Group together with Mable can bring you experts in their field from across the world, for example, Julie also works as a consultant for a charity called Voices for Down's Syndrome in Ireland and alongside her Mable sessions, she runs the speech and Language service for the Down Syndrome Centre in the Midlands. Another Mable Therapist Emanuela recently won ESLPS Star award for extraordinary contributions to the field of Speech and Language Pathology in the Emirates.

"We are delighted to be collaborating with Swindon Down Syndrome Group to offer our online clinical services. We hope a continued collaboration with the group which means many more children are able to access essential speech and language support and show the world what they are capable of through communication"

Martha Currie, Mable Therapy

YOUTH CLUB

Like many of our services Youth Club had to stop due to the pandemic and move to an online platform.



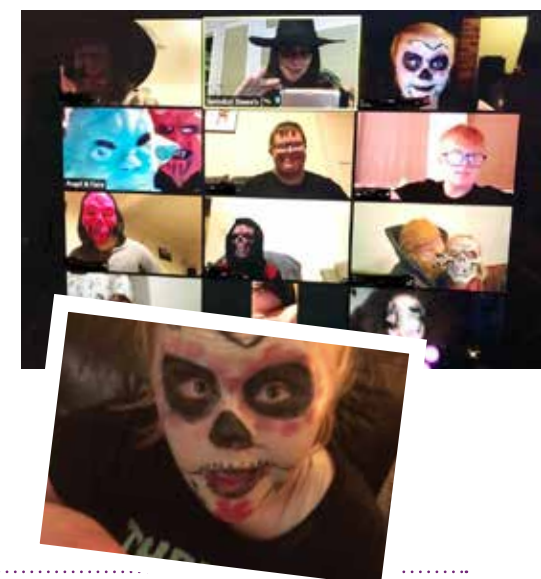
If there is one good thing to come out of the pandemic it's that our Youth Club has been able to reach more members from much further afield.

Every fortnight we welcome lots of our teenage and adult members to our virtual youth club. As you can imagine it was no easy task to try and emulate what we had when we used to meet at Toothill Farmhouse on Zoom. With a bit of thought and imagination we did just that.

Virtual bingo, quizzes, play your cards right, 'go-fetch', heads and tails are just some of the regular activities we do and not to mention the odd singalong!

It was lovely to get some feedback from one of the parents who said, "She is particularly enjoying the virtual youth club and the ingenious games that are played."

Cailey who with the help of Michael Billinge-Jones and John Stow said, "I have thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of bringing youth club online. It's wonderful just to just watch everyone chat and catch up on what they have been up to. We have some avid soap fans at youth club so can guarantee a conversation about Eastenders."



KEEPING FIT AND ACTIVE

Our regular sporting activities were massively impacted by the various lockdowns and restrictions during the year.

Swindon DS Active Football

by Brad Carter
STFC Community Foundation

The year started off with the weekly football sessions taking place at the Haydon Centre every Wednesday evening, up until the lockdown caused indoor sporting activities to stop in March. In this short period at the start of the year it was great to see up to 12 players regularly attending and improving their football skills!

During the lockdown period, the Foundation looked for ways to stay in touch with the DS Active players. Some of the Foundation staff made home visits to deliver Swindon Town snoods to the DS Active players, who lived locally, which offered a chance to have a socially distanced catch up. In addition, a number of Zoom calls with the DS Active team were arranged, initially on a fortnightly basis, with various activities such as a scavenger hunt, charades, and a Christmas themed quiz.



Before Christmas, the DS Active players received a goodie bag of Premier League and Swindon Town gifts as a present. The Foundation worked alongside the DS Active group to distribute the gifts to the players, which were well received.

It has been great to be able to remain connected with our DS Active players during the difficult period and we hope it's not long before we are able to return to the weekly football sessions.



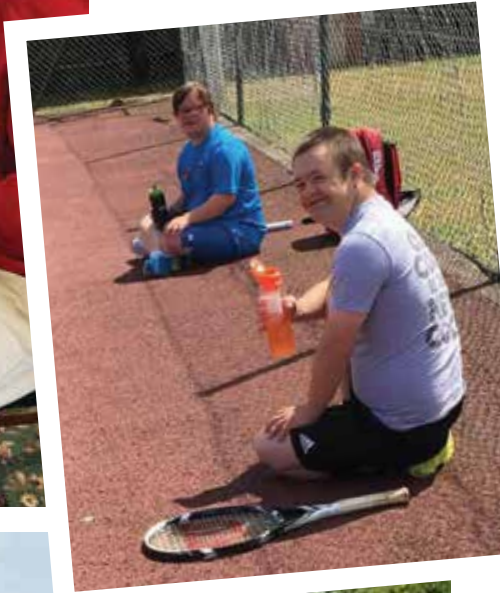
by Sammy Hiscocks
STFC Community Foundation

It has been an absolute honour to be a part of the Swindon Town FC Community Foundation's Zoom calls with members of our DS Active team. What a fantastic bunch of young players we have.

It's been so lovely to keep in touch with you all, seeing you smiling and laughing in these uncertain times.

I have really enjoyed the activities that we have shared together during our time on zoom. We have taken part in quizzes, had a go at karaoke (thank goodness for the mute button), a guess the animal describing game and have laughed our socks off during our scavenger hunts. That's the last time I use keys during a scavenger hunt. I didn't realise keys sounded like peas... I'll leave that one to your imagination. We have had so much fun together.

It has been a pleasure. Thank you for putting a smile on my face and keeping me company during these lockdowns. I hope we will be able to continue our fun and games face to face really soon.



Swimming

by John Stow

Our fortnightly swimming sessions at Thamesdown Hydrotherapy Pool were unable to run between April and October. When the pool did reopen, COVID restrictions meant that a maximum of only ten people could swim at any session. The few that did return relished the chance of some exercise and being able to see friends

again, obviously keeping at a distance. As 2020 ended, we again entered a lockdown and swimming was again put on hold. We intend returning to the water as soon as allowed in 2021 so, if anyone wants more information please email swimming@swindondownsgroup.org.uk.

Tennis

by John Stow

Tennis sessions were impacted more and have not resumed at Delta Tennis Centre since being suspended during the first lockdown. When restrictions were eased during the summer, some players managed to get on court outdoors within the LTA guidelines but Delta have not yet resumed their disability programme. The LTA competitions were also badly affected this year meaning that the players from our Group were unable to compete against others from around the country.

Other sports

In previous years we have been able to offer occasional sessions in other sports to our members. Sadly, these were also unable to happen once we went into lockdown. With different sports having to follow their own specific guidelines, running bespoke disability sessions was off the agenda. However, we did manage to team up again with Swindon Shock Wheelchair Basketball back in February. This gave our members a chance to try a mixture of basketball and wheelchair basketball and concentrated on basic skills such as dribbling, shooting and, of course, chair control. We aim to try and offer the chance to try out more sports in 2021, when situations allow. These will hopefully include cricket and athletics sessions.

SALAMANDER FIRE COURSE

WRITTEN BY NICKY PARKER

August should have been one of the highlights of the DWFRS Swindon Salamander year with Swindon Down's Syndrome Group's annual Salamander course... and this would have been year 12!

Those members of the group booked on this year's course have been guaranteed a place on the next SDSG course but due to Covid-19 that could be a long way off and our learners, firefighter instructors and support staff were all extremely disappointed.

So, we launched a series of five challenges for the SDSG Salamander learners past, present and future with a certificate of participation for those completing all five.

Instructors joined in with the Observational Challenge and Swindon Police with the Creative Challenge.

All those that participated sent in photo or video evidence that we posted on our Salamander Facebook page and the Swindon Down's Syndrome Group shared on their Facebook page too.



The challenges:

- 1. Problem-Solving Challenge** – a firefighter must make his way across a course with fire, water and fuel but carrying one item at a time. Fuel and fire could not be left together, and neither could water and fire.
- 2. Creative Challenge** – create a firefighter.
- 3. Observation Challenge** – emergency equipment scavenger hunt in their local community.
- 4. Fitness Challenge** – climb the equivalent of the aerial ladder platform (32m!), crawl through a homemade tunnel equivalent to a smokehouse tunnel, hop or jump the length of a fire hose.

- 5. Fire Safety Challenge** – make an escape plan and practise it and also to test their smoke detector.

This was an opportunity for us to embed some important home fire safety messages, an opportunity to engage and celebrate the achievements of our learners and just to have some fun when life was pretty difficult for all.

We were just amazed at the creativity and enthusiasm as well as delighted by the sheer joy as they saw themselves on social media, counted their 'likes' and revelled in the positive comments.

It was an opportunity to showcase skill, enthusiasm, engagement and artistry – well done, all!



Since 2015, the partnership between the DSA's WorkFit programme and the Swindon Down's syndrome Support Group has been providing a tailored employment programme for people with Down's syndrome in Swindon and Wiltshire.

We are pleased to announce that the partnership will be continuing into 2021 and beyond.

WorkFit brings together employers and jobseekers who have Down's syndrome. It is a tailored service dedicated to training employers about the learning profile of people who have Down's syndrome so that they can be supported in the workplace. Work can be anything from paid jobs, volunteering roles, work experience or supported internships/apprenticeships.

The arrival of the Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic has significantly impacted delivery of the WorkFit programme in all areas, with almost all opportunities being suspended. Throughout the last year, WorkFit has been supporting candidates and their families with any support needs relating to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), benefits, mental health and well-being etc. with the support of the Down's Syndrome Association's Information Team and Helpline service. This support will continue and we are ready to assist candidates

who may be returning to work after the end of the CJRS.

Our new WorkFit Liaison Officer was scheduled to begin in post last summer (2020), providing local knowledge and on the spot support to employers and candidates seeking work, however due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this has been deferred for now and we hope that the successful applicant will be able to take up the post in the Spring/Summer of 2021.

We are looking forward to engaging with local businesses later this year as circumstances allow and will be welcoming employers to planned events to let them know about WorkFit and what support we can offer them to develop an opportunity for someone who has Down's syndrome. These networking events will be the perfect opportunity to ask questions and hear from local businesses. Feedback from the WorkFit Employment Development Manager, is that employers are continuing to enquire about and register for the WorkFit programme and there is a lot of optimism around developing future opportunities.

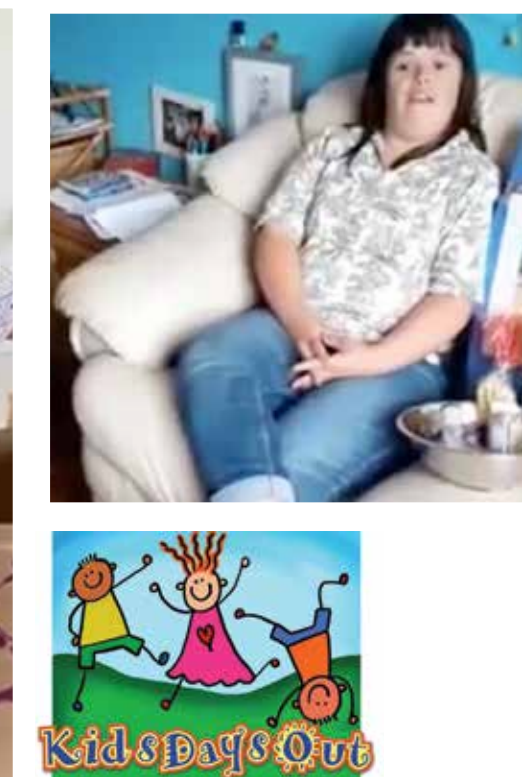
SUMMER ACTIVITY BOXES

Every summer, the Group arranges a family day-out, usually to a theme park.

BY JOHN STOW

This was not possible in 2020 so we had to look at how we could help our members stay active and engaged over the long summer break, especially as many had been stuck at home for a long period prior to summer.

What we came up with was the SUMMER BOX. The boxes were age-group specific and contained a mix of arts, crafts and sporty items. We were fortunate to receive grant funding from Wiltshire and Swindon Sport (WASP) and we worked with Swindon Children's Scrapstore to source the contents. When the boxes were delivered by Trustees to the families there were lots of happy faces and the Group received an amazing amount of positive feedback.



CHRISTMAS BOXES



100
FAMILIES
RECIEVED A
CHRISTMAS
ACTIVITY BOX

BY CAILEY WHITCHER

The Group's Christmas party and trip to the pantomime are two of the biggest events in the Group's calendar. As with all our other events, they too had to be cancelled.

We know how much our members look forward to these two events and it's almost unheard of for them not to go ahead.

We couldn't end the year without doing something for the families we support so the Trustees came up with the idea of giving everyone a Christmas box.

KidsDaysOut had planned to give us a donation towards the Pantomime trip so we approached them with our idea and they were more than happy to help us fund our Christmas Boxes.

We once again enlisted the help of Swindon Children's Scrapstore to help us fill the boxes with wonderful Christmas activities, gifts and treats. ASDA West Swindon kindly donated some chocolates and mince pies too.

The Trustees once again, filled their cars and headed across Swindon and Wiltshire to spread to some festive cheer. We recieved so many kind letters, cards and emails thanking us for the boxes.

While the boxes can never replace the traditional fun and games of our Christmas party it was just great that we could do something to bring a bit of festive cheer.



CHRISTMAS SIGN-A-LONG

BY MICHAEL BILLINGE-JONES

The trustees knew it would be unlikely that we would be able to have Christmas parties and get-togethers during December.

We decided to create a virtual sing-a-long for a bit of fun, entertainment and hopefully raise some funds for the Group.

A carol was chosen (Jingle Bells) as it is familiar to most of us. An email was sent out asking for participants to sing a few lines and the chorus. We had sixteen responses from people willing to take part.

Over the next few weeks I had 56 video clips emailed to me. I spent a few hours cutting and pasting various clips together to make the final version. It was great to see some of you dressed up and singing the carol for us.

The final video was put on Facebook with a link to a donation page. We had a fantastic response with 2,500 views, lots of likes and raised a fantastic £820 for our Group.

A huge thank you for all those who sent a clip in and also to those generous people who donated.



PRIMARY & PRE-SCHOOL TRAINING DAYS

We offer dedicated training days to support educational professionals who work closely with a child with Down's syndrome - something which is not currently provided by our Local Authority.



Children with Down's syndrome are all unique individuals, however we know they share a common learning profile. This means we have a good understanding of how to support a pupil with Down's syndrome in a learning setting and how to maximise their potential to acquire new skills and be included in the classroom with their peers.

This year our training day took place virtually over Zoom. It was once again, led by Gillian Bird, Services Director at The Down's Syndrome

Association and attended was as popular as previous years with 27 delegates in attendance.

Based on feedback from the previous year we split the sessions to focus on different age categories and give those attending a broad overview of the learning profile of children with Down's syndrome and how best to support their learning needs.

IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU, OUR SUPPORTERS

We are so grateful to everyone who has supported us over the past year.

We owe a huge thank you to every single person, group or business that has helped us to support our young people with Down's syndrome. In particular we'd like to thank the following supporters.

OUR PATRONS

Cliff Puffett
Julie Thomas

OUR TRUSTEES

Kim West
John Stow
Sam Harding
Cailey Whitcher
Jo Messenger
Ian Tuckwell
Amanda Ager
Michael Billinge-Jones
Roy Perrett
Victoria McGuire

OUR SUPPORTERS

Riz Sheik
Zurich Community Trust
Nationwide
Wiltshire Police
Down's Syndrome International
Rubber Chicken
DS Active
Swindon Phoenix Rotary
Swindon Town Football Club
Fairfield College
Justin Tomlinson MP
Wiltshire and Dorset
Fire and Rescue
CAT's Solutions
Nutmeg Design
Wiltshire Community Foundation
Greensquare Group
National Lottery
The Julia and Hans Trustees
Wiltshire and Swindon Sport (WASPS)
Kids Days Out
Midcounties Coop
Swindon Children's Scrap Store
TD Williamson
Morris Owen
ASDA West Swindon
ASDA Orbital
Mable Speech Therapy
Clair & Carol Hill
Paddy Brennan
Swindon Rotary TST
Cliff Puffett
Angela Ruck
Sue Frawley
Dignity
Holdcroft Enterprises
M Hillier
Honda trading
Martyn Coles
Jodie Morris

Mrs L S Parry
Copy Color
Marina Billinge-Jones
Nicki Denver
Mandy McAlpine
Nationwide
APD Communications
Jockey Club
The Crown Inn, Stratton
Simon & Lauren Craige
CJ Scahill
Waitrose Swindon
Fairfield Farm College
Swindon Phoenix Rotary
Swindon North Rotary
USAY Compare
Dawn's birthday fundraiser
D Leinster
Swindon Lions

FUNDRAISING

ASDA foundation
presents us
with £1000 cheque

We were chosen to be part of the ASDA Walmart quarterly green token customers vote. We were delighted to be chosen as the winners and were presented in February with a cheque for £1000 which will be split between WorkFit, Salamander and Speech and Language Therapy.



The Crown Inn in Stratton hosted a charity fundraiser in aid of the Group during Down's Awareness week. The pub raised a fantastic £277.73 from the quiz night which included Rock and Roll Bingo and a raffle.

the 2.6 challenge



Brave supporters get the chop for Salamander

Courageous family members, friends and supporters waxed and shaved various parts of their bodies in November 2019 in a bid to raising funds for our Salamander project. They raised over £3000. A massive thank you to everyone who took part and to Nicki for organising the event.



Wine tasting is a winner

Thank you to Mandy McAlpine and Nicki Denver for organising a fantastic fundraising evening at Magnum Wines in Swindon. Everyone was treated to eight different wines as well as enjoying delicious cheeses and nibbles throughout the night. The event raised £536 for Salamander.



We dance our socks off for 2.6 challenge

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic effect with the cancellation of thousands of events and the loss of income through fundraising events.

The country joined together on 26 April to do the 2.6 Challenge.

As a group we chose to 'fund-rave' and ask our members to dance for 2.6 minutes. All the videos were shared on our social media. Family, friends and supporters were encouraged to donate through our dedicated Virgin Money Giving page.

So far we have raised over £400 with the possibility of more to come. Thank you to everyone who took part and donated.

Martyn takes on three peaks

Martyn Coles runs local scaffolding company Coles Scaffolding. In September Martyn took on the three peaks challenge to raise funds for the Group.

“At Coles we pride ourselves on being an inclusive employer, giving opportunities to young people and disadvantaged adults who may find it challenging to get an opportunity to prove what they can do in the workplace.

In September 2020, I took on the challenge of climbing the three peaks (Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon) in 24 hours.

Out of ten of us who took part, only four of us completed the full challenge and I am proud to be one of them.



“I knew the challenge would be tough physically but I think I underestimated the emotional strain”

My driving force behind my willingness to finish was that I had committed to spreading my mum's ashes, who passed away last year, at the top of each mountain peak. There was no way I was going to stop and let her down!

I knew the challenge would be tough physically but I think I underestimated the emotional strain that came from spreading my mum's ashes. I miss my mum every day, she was mine and my daughters' world. Completing this challenge and putting my mum “on top of the

world” (or at least, at the highest points in the UK!) meant a lot to me.

The Swindon Down's Syndrome Group has been close to mine (and my mum's) hearts for a number of years so it was only right that any donations I was able to support a charity that means so much to us.”

Martyn employs Todd, who has Down's syndrome, as a part-time scaffolder.

“Todd is not only a colleague but also a close friend, his disability

doesn't get in the way of any aspect of his life - so why should it stand in the way of him being able to work? Todd works just as hard as the rest of the team and we can't imagine the Christmas party without him!

I signed up to the WorkFit scheme as Todd was a friend seeking an opportunity. I'm fortunate to have a growing business so would support any of my friends who needed an opportunity.

Martyn set himself a target of £300 but due to the generous nature of his friends, colleagues and network, he has been able to raise an amazing £2,330.

I've never seen the fact that Todd has Down's syndrome as a barrier and so it was only right to welcome him into the team, as I would with anyone else.”

We asked Martyn if he would do anything like this again in the future?, he said “I'm always up for a challenge and raising money for Swindon Down's Syndrome Group so, yes absolutely! The next adventure I am planning is the Atlas Mountain in Morocco.

If you'd like to follow Martyn's progress search for Coles Scaffolding on Facebook or Instagram, or Martyn Coles on LinkedIn, and give him a follow.



On 4th December, National Sock Day, we decided to use this as an opportunity to raise awareness and promote the sales of our #lotsofsocks stock left over from WDS. The pandemic had stopped us being able to go out in to our community and sell socks and with the help of Zurich Community Foundation we launched a campaign 'Sock it to them' to boost sales.

New design Christmas cards



Our Christmas cards were back for 2020 and included two new designs! Local artist Aradhna from Aradhna's Art created the new birds and hedgehog designs for us to sell this year. We were very grateful that CATs Solutions were able to print the cards for us too.

#LotsofSocks

Down's Awareness Week 2020

It was amazing to see so many of our members and supporters taking part in WDSO 2020.

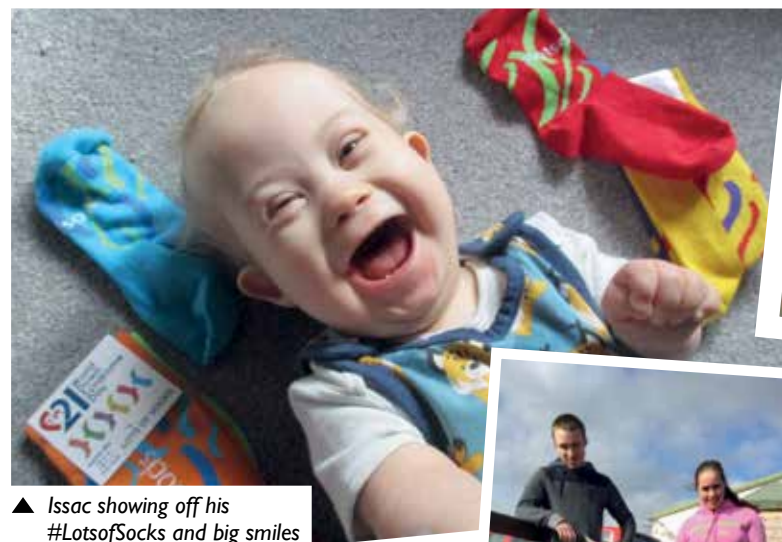
Thank you to everyone who wore, bought or sold socks for us including Nationwide HQ, Nationwide Optimus House, Wiltshire Police HQ, The Crown Inn in Stratton, Swindon Police, Fairfield Farm College, Aster Housing, APD Communications, Devizes Fire Station, Peel House Residential Care Home - Melksham, Avon Tyres, Marlborough College, Uplands School, Mercedes-Benz, Ridgeway Medi Spa, Waitrose, Spec Savers and Great Western Hospital.



► Kylo and his bear showing off their #LotsofSocks



▼ Alex helped us promote #LotsofSocks



▲ Issac showing off his #LotsofSocks and big smiles



◀▲ The staff and students at Fairfield Farm Trust



▼ Jeremy selling #LotsofSocks and Sock Monkeys with Wiltshire Police



▲ Our baby sock monkey enjoying the spring sunshine



▲ Lane did a tremendous job selling #LotsofSocks at Nationwide Headquarters



▲ Lane and John Stow with the help of Sophie and Kim West from the Group gave up their evening to sell socks at the game between Swindon and Scunthorpe United. It was fantastic to meet so many Swindon Town fans and with their support we raised an amazing £775.96.

GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

Charity name: Swindon Down's Syndrome Group
Charity number: 1158449
Principal office: 34 Periwinkle Close, Swindon SN2 2QH

Governing document

Swindon Down's Syndrome Group is constituted as a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) registered with the Charity Commission. It is governed by a constitution last updated in 2018.

Charitable objects:

The objects of the CIO are to relieve the charitable needs of people with Down's syndrome, and their families, helpers and carers in particular but not exclusively by the provision of support and information and speech and language therapy so that they are able to attain their full potential and to undertake any other charitable activities in connection with the relief of Down's syndrome in the SN postcode and the surrounding area. (Area of Benefit)

Surrounding area to be defined as – “post code areas associated to Fairford, Malmesbury, Hungerford, Pewsey, Marlborough, Hullavington, Chippenham, Devizes, Calne, Ashton Keynes, Cirencester, Aldbourne, Bromham, Melksham and Cheltenham.”

Activities:

We are a parent-led charity supporting people with down's syndrome, their families, carers and all those with an interest in down's syndrome in Swindon and the surrounding area. We are an independent charity, affiliated to the national down's syndrome association.

Organisation structure

The charity trustees are responsible for the general control and management of the charity. The trustees give their time freely and receive no remuneration or other financial benefits.

The trustees meet together as a body monthly and are responsible for all decisions taken in relation to running the charity. The charity can have a maximum of 10 trustees.

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year
Kim West	Chair	
John Stow	Vice Chair	
Sam Harding	Treasurer	
Cailey Whitcher	Secretary	
Ian Tuckwell	Vice Treasurer	
Michael Billinge-Jones		
Joanna Messenger		
Amanda Ager		
Victoria McGuire		18/4/2020-present
Royden Perrett		18/4/2020-present
Nicki Denver		Resigned 18/4/2020
Leslye Russell-Pierce		Resigned 18/4/2020

Recruitment and appointment of trustees

The existing trustees are responsible for the recruitment of new trustees. In appointing new trustees we seek people who are part of our local community. Potential trustees are invited to trustees' meetings or to meet with the chairperson to learn more about the charity's aims and objectives. If all trustees agree they are proposed as new trustees. New trustees are required to complete a DBS check and given a three month trial. This process allows due consideration of the person's eligibility, personal competence, specialist knowledge and skills.

Public benefit

The trustees have paid due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in deciding what activities the charity should undertake. The trustees consider that they have acted in the public benefit.

Financial review and reserves policy

At 31 December 2020 the charity held total funds of £82,929, of which £79,508 were restricted and £3,421 were unrestricted. The charity has minimal overheads as it is run by volunteers and so it does not need to build up reserves. The restricted funds comprise:

Speech	
Donations and grants to provide speech therapy	£40,663
Salamander	
Donations and grants to run fund the fire course	£8,620
WorkFit	
Donations and grants to support adults in the world of work	£4,466
Other smaller funds	£25,759
Total restricted funds	£79,508

Approved by the trustees and signed on its behalf by:

Kim West, Chairperson
Swindon Down's Syndrome Group

THE FUTURE

Our plans for 2021 onwards is to continue on our mission to help people with Down's syndrome to have the same opportunities as everyone else and raise awareness of Down's syndrome in the local community.

In 2021 we aim to build on our speech therapy provision by offering Adult Speech. Up to now we have only been able to support people until they are 25 but we recognise the value this will bring to our adult members as well. We are looking to raise £20,000 and hope to have the service in place by the end of the year.

The Covid pandemic limited our fundraising abilities, but hopefully 2021 will allow us to be out in the community more, organising events, bringing in much needed funds.

Some of our plans to offer additional support for those in the primary age bracket had to be put on hold. While we delivered what we could virtually, our hope is to be able to hold more information evenings, drop-in parent chats and some soft-play sessions too.

We have made great progress in developing our relationships with local schools and in 2021 we want to build on this further. We already have plans to deliver a talk to the Early Years SENCo team and hope to offer more talks throughout the year.

After talking with parents we have found that there isn't a clear pathway for a child born with Down's syndrome and an inconsistency in the services they are offered. We are working on a pathway document with the support of health and educational professionals in Swindon and Wiltshire so that parents can see what care they should be receiving at the different points in their child's life.

By the end of 2021 our new WorkFit Liaison Officer should be in place and if safe to do so our young people back into work places.

We always welcome the ideas and support of our parents and carers, we would love for more of you to be involved in shaping what do. Together we can do great things.

The Swindon Down's Syndrome Group is a parent-led charity supporting people with Down's syndrome and their families in Swindon and the surrounding area.

We are here to help people with Down's syndrome to have the same opportunities as everyone else and raise awareness of Down's syndrome in the local community.

REGISTERED CHARITY

Swindon Down's Syndrome Group is a UK registered charity. Registered Office 34 Periwinkle Close Swindon SN2 2QH.

Charity number: 1158449

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www.swindondownsgroup.org.uk



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**





Charity Name	No (if any)
Swindon Downs Syndrome Group	1158449

CC16a

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	01.01.20		31.12.20

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	3,851	45,403	-	49,254	27,928
Outings/Parties/Sports		985	-	985	5,631
Fundraising	388	14,190	-	14,578	23,522
Miscellaneous			-	-	-
Training		536	-	536	2,096
Speech Therapy			-	-	-
Interest		90	-	90	127
Membership	1,080		-	1,080	905
Sub total	5,319	61,204	-	66,523	60,209
A2 Asset and investment sales, etc.	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	5,319	61,204	-	66,523	60,209
A3 Payments					
Outings/Parties/Sports/Clubs		6,252	-	6,252	20,557
Fundraising	40	9,326	-	9,366	6,871
Newsletter/Postage	4	985	-	989	1,969
Speech Therapy	1,000	21,728	-	22,728	16,705
Training		400	-	400	1,512
Miscellaneous	3,776	280	-	4,056	3,945
WorkFit			-	-	530
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
Sub total	4,820	38,971	-	43,791	52,089
A4 Asset and investment purchases, etc.	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	4,820	38,971	-	43,791	52,089
Net of receipts/(payments)	499	22,233	-	22,732	8,121
A5 Transfers between funds			-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	2,922	57,275	-	60,197	52,076
Cash funds this year end	3,421	79,508	-	82,929	60,197

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Santander	3,421	48,986	-
	Teachers Building Society	-	29,788	-
	Paypal	-	734	-
	Total cash funds	3,421	79,508	-
	(eg: see balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

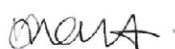
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature



Print Name

Kim West

Date of approval

18/03/2021



CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name
Swindon Down's Syndrome Group

On accounts for the year
ended

31 December 2020

Charity no
(if any)

1158449

Set out on pages

29 and 30

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/12/2020.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date:

18th March 2021

Name:

Steve Fraser

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

FCA

Address:

MHA Monahans, 38-42 Newport Street, Swindon, SN1 3DR